

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 BIB-01 ICA-11 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 SS-15 H-01 PA-01 NSC-05 /057 W  
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R 060958Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1152

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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E.O.11652: NA

TAGS: PROP SOPN HU US

SUBJECT: SEMI-ANNUAL EVALUATION OF RFE BROADCASTS TO HUNGARY

REF: 77 BUDAPEST 3645

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONTINUES TO FIND TONE AND CONTENT OF RFE HUNGARIAN BROADCASTS EXCELLENT AND A MAJOR ELEMENT IN INFORMAING HUNGARIANS OF EVENTS OUTSIDE AND WITHIN HUNGARY'S FRONTIERS. END SUMMARY.

2. A THOROUGH REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPTS SUPPLIED BY RFE COVERING LAST SIX MONTHS OF BROADCASTING REVEALS GENERAL EXCELLENCE OF PROGRAMMING. RFE CRITICISM OF DEFICIENCIES OF COMMUNIST SYSTEM HAS BEEN GENERALLY WELL FOUNDED, NON-POLEMICAL AND FREE FROM LECTURING OR SELF-RIGHTEOUS TONE. RESTRAINED

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CRITICISMS SEEM PERFECTLY SUITABLE FOR SOPHISTICATED HUNGARIAN AUDIENCE WHICH HAS ACCESS TO OTHER WESTERN NEWS MEDIA INCLUDING RADIO, TV, AND PRINTED MATTER, AND WHOSE DOMESTIC NEWSPAPERS ALSO PRESENT A SOPHISTICATED, IF SLANTED, VIEW OF THE NEWS.

3. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO GAIN IMPRESSION FROM NUMBER

OF HUNGARIAN CONTACTS THAT RFE IS LISTENED TO AS A MATTER OF COURSE BY A WIDE RANGE OF HUNGARIAN ELITE. SEVERAL HABITUAL LISTENERS HAVE COMMENTED ON IMPROVED OBJECTIVITY AND TONE, FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, EXHIBITED BY THE RADIO'S HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS OVER THE PAST YEAR OR TWO, THUS CORROBORATING EMBASSY'S OWN EVALUATION.

4. EMBASSY CREDITS RFE WITH OVER-ALL GOOD COVERAGE OF EVENTS SURROUNDING RETURN OF CROWN. WHILE EARLY REPORTING OF DECISION AND CONTROVERSY IT PROVOKED IN SOME SEGMENTS OF AMERICAN PRESS OCCASIONALLY SEEMED TO BE SOMEWHAT REGRETFUL AND FOCUSED ON OPPOSITION TO THE CROWN'S RETURN BY SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, ONCE DECISION BECAME FIRM, CUSTOMARY RFE OBJECTIVITY REAPPEARED. ON-SPOT COVERAGE PROVIDED BY RFE CORRESPONDENT WHO CAME TO BUDAPEST FOR CROWN RETURN CEREMONIES WAS ESPECIALLY FINE TOUCH. AT FIRST GOH INFORMED EMBASSY THAT IT DID NOT WISH TO ADMIT AN RFE CORRESPONDENT TO REPORT ON CROWN'S RETURN, BUT WHEN FACED WITH NEWS THAT AN RFE CORRESPONDENT WAS GOING TO BE ON PLANE CARRYING CROWN BACK TO HUNGARY AND POLAND HAD ADMITTED AN RFE CORRESPONDENT TO COVER THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT IN THAT COUNTRY, GOH ACQUIESCED IN HIS ARRIVAL. ONCE HERE HE WAS GIVEN EXCELLENT TREATMENT BY GOH ENABLING HIM TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BALANCED AND IMAGINATIVE RFE COVERAGE.

5. WITH REGARD TO INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE, RFE HANDLED WITH APPROPRIATE DELICACY AND TACT (FEB 9 BROADCAST, FOR EXAMPLE) THE DECISION OF HUNGARIAN DISSIDENT INTELLECTUALS, INCLUDING AGNES HELLER, TO LEAVE HUNGARY, WISELY RELYING ON STATEMENTS OF HELLER AND CULTURE MINISTER POSZGAY TO HAVE THEIR OWN REVEALING EFFECT. BUT PIECES SUCH AS ONE GIVING WEST GERMAN NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS OF SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN INTELLECTUALS (BROADCAST FEB 2) ALSO WERE WELL DONE. SO WAS ITEM ON HUNGARIAN SAMIZDAT PUBLICATIONS (FEB 18). DISCUSSION OF GREATER SUPPORT FOR APOLITICAL ROLE OF SCIENTIST IN HUNGARY (FEB 25) AND POINTING OUT OF CONTRADICTIONS IN KADAR'S PRAISE FOR SOVIET TROOPS TEMPORARILY STATIONED IN HUNGARY (FEB 23) WERE FURTHER EXAMPLES OF THOUGHTFUL RFE BROADCASTING. BROADCAST ON KADAR'S POSITION ON EUROCOMMUNISM (OCT 8) CREDITED HIM WITH MODERATE VIEWPOINT AND WAS TACTFUL DISCUSSION OF HIS MEDIATING ROLE IN WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. FINALLY, EMBASSY WISHES FAVORABLY ACKNOWLEDGE EXCELLENT REPORTING ON RELATIONS BETWEEN

CHURCH AND STATE. SUCH BROADCASTS ARE EXTREMELY USEFUL FOR NEWS OF CHURCH STATE RELATIONS IN HUNGARY IS CONFINED LARGELY TO VERY LIMITED CIRCULATION CHURCH PRESS AND WOULD NOT OTHERWISE REACH ENTIRE INTERESTED AUDIENCE AMONG HUNGARIAN PUBLIC.

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6. ECONOMICS-RELATED BROADCASTS CONTINUE TO NOTE HUNGARIAN PROGRESS ALONG WITH SHORTCOMINGS, IN OUR VIEW A SURE MEANS OF ENHANCING RFE'S CREDIBILITY. BALANCED PIECES ON NEW ECONOMIC MECHANISM (FEB 1); DISECONOMIES OF TRADE WITH CEMA (NOV 2); HUNGARY'S HOUSING PROBLEMS (SEP 14); DISGUISED UNEMPLOYMENT (SEP 28); AND RELATIONS WITH COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES (MAR 3) ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF REPORTING WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE OVERCOME ALMOST ENTIRELY EXCESSIVELY NEGATIVE TONE OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

7. WITH RESPECT TO CROSS-REPORTING EMBASSY AGAIN FINDS THAT BROADCAST ON CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS OF HIGH VALUE ALONG WITH CONTINUED EMPHASIS BEING GIVEN TO EAST EUROPEAN DISSIDENTS, EUROCOMMUNISM, AND ITALIAN AND FRENCH ELECTIONS. TREATMENT OF DELICATE ISSUE OF

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ROMANIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS HUNGARIAN ETHNIC MINORITY (JAN 30 AND MAR 2, FOR EXAMPLE) HAS ALSO BEEN COMMENDABLE.

8. EMBASSY HAS FOUND INTERNATIONAL TOPICS, AS REPORTED IN DAILY BROADCAST ANALYSES, WELL CHOSEN AND TIMELY. DISCUSSIONS AND REPORTAGE ON CSCE, SALT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS AS THEY AFFECT SOCIALIST COUNTRIES ARE PARTICULARLY USEFUL. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE TO GIVE MUCH GREATER COVERAGE TO U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. THE TOPIC IS APPARENTLY HARDLY COVERED NOW. EMBASSY FEELS THAT A GREATER EFFORT NEEDS TO BE MADE TO DISPEL ILLUSION AND COUNTER PROPAGANDA IN HUNGARY TO EFFECT HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES OF U.S. ARE TARGETED SOLELY AGAINST COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. WE ALSO BELIEVE RFE MIGHT DEVOTE MORE TIME IN ITS INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE TO DISARMAMENT ISSUES OTHER THAN SALT AND TO PRESENTING THE AMERICAN SIDE OF THE NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE.

9. EMBASSY HAS STRIVEN HARD TO FIND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF RFE HUNGARIAN BROADCASTS. WE HAVE TRIED TO KEEP IN FOREFRONT NEED FOR CREDIBLE, RESTRAINED, NON-POLEMIC REPORTING WHICH RECOGNIZES HUNGARY'S SUCCESSES AS WELL AS DEFICIENCIES -- WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING RFE IS SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHING THIS TASK. BUT IT IS HARD TO FIND CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS BY WHICH RFE CAN IMPROVE ITS ALREADY TOP-NOTCH HUNGARIAN BROADCASTING. WE AGAIN CONGRATULATE RFE ON ITS FINE PERFORMANCE.

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## Message Attributes

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